

UCLA Faculty Association

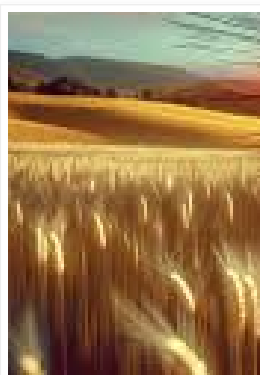
News and opinion from Dan Mitchell since 2009

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Saturday, December 6, 2025

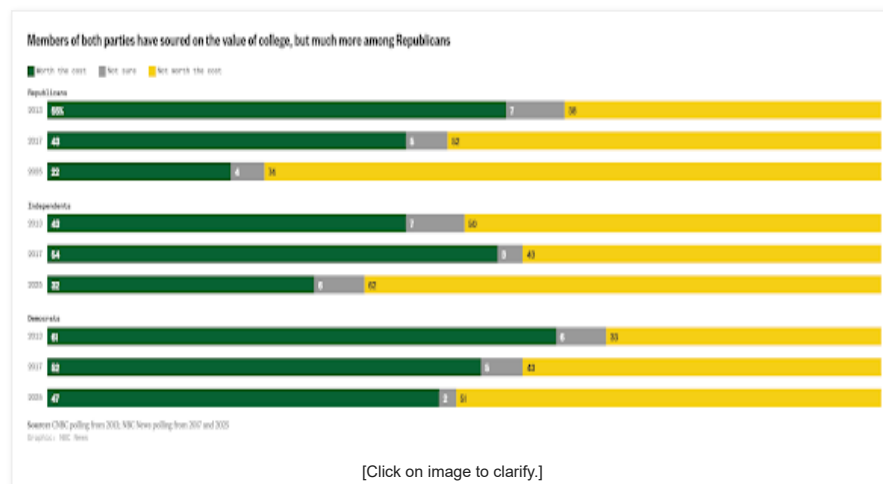
Straws in the Wind - Part 183

From NBC: Americans have grown sour on one of the longtime key ingredients of the American dream. Almost two-thirds of registered voters say that a four-year college degree isn't worth the cost, according to a new NBC News poll, a dramatic decline over the last decade. Just 33% agree a four-year college degree is "worth the cost because people have a better chance to get a good job and earn more money over their lifetime," while 63% agree more with the concept that it's "not worth the cost because people often graduate without specific job skills and with a large amount of debt to pay off."



...The eye-popping shift over the last 12 years comes against the backdrop of several major trends shaping the job market and the education world, from exploding college tuition prices to rapid changes in the modern economy — which seems once again poised for radical transformation alongside advances in AI.

...What has shifted is the price of college. While there have been some small declines in tuition prices over the last decade, when adjusted for inflation, College Board data shows that the average, inflation-adjusted cost of public four-year college tuition for in-state students has doubled since 1995. Tuition at private, four-year colleges is up 75% over the same period. Poll respondents who spoke with NBC News all emphasized those rising costs as a major reason why the value of a four-year degree has been undercut...



Full story at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/amp/rcna243672>.

From Inside Higher Ed: Chief diversity officers find their work has gotten harder and more stressful over the past two years, according to a new national survey by the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. The survey results... are based on responses from 394 chief and academic diversity officers in February 2025.*

The Council of UC Faculty Associations

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- [Our Concerns Over Revisions to APMs 15 and 16](#)
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Topics

...About 68 percent of respondents reported their jobs were less predictable than two years ago; 87 percent found their work more stressful, and 77 percent reported their jobs were more upsetting. The vast majority of diversity officers—91 percent—identified the political climate as the greatest challenge to DEI work on campuses. Students' and employees' mental health and crisis management also rose to the top of their concerns. About 31 percent of respondents said their roles have changed in the past two years, with write-in responses about promotions, demotions, title changes and expanding responsibilities related to student success, human resources, Title IX and other campus functions. About 29 percent reported their DEI offices had been reorganized.

Full story at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2025/12/03/chief-diversity-officers-report-stress-amid-shifting-roles>.

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*<https://nadohe.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/resources/NADOHE-2025-State-of-the-CDO.pdf>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:20 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [diversity](#), [politics](#), [tuition](#)

Friday, December 5, 2025

The Elephant in the Zoom



The California State Auditor (CSA) apparently raised questions about use of "Online Program Management" companies (OPMs) to provide online instruction UC campuses. Since online instruction came into use, there have been commercial firms that provide instruction and have internet platforms for doing so. The Auditor apparently was concerned about who was doing the instruction as opposed to the method of delivery. **The systemwide Academic Senate conducted a review in response.**

Much of Senate review seems focused on "transparency" about who was doing the instruction, i.e., disclosing whether the instructor was from UC or from the outside OPM. But there seems to be a larger issue about outsourcing teaching. **While much is said in the review about assuring quality, the review seems to sidestep the issue of outsourcing instruction. This avoidance seems surprising given the sometimes excessive concerns at UC and at the UC campuses about protecting "brands." Do we really want to have students, who have competed to be admitted to a UC campus and program, be taught by outside OPM instructors? Is that what our students thought they would be getting when they applied?**

That's the unaddressed Elephant in the Zoom.

We reproduce below the cover letter of the review dated Nov. 20 to UC Provost Newman from Academic Council Chair Palazoglu. However, as noted, the issue raised in the Nov. 5 letter to Chair Palazoglu from Katheryn Niles Russ, Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate, Professor of Economics, University of California, Davis, seems to have been neglected in the final report:

...UGC [Undergraduate Council] highlights their concern that the California State Auditor's (CSA) report revealed that OPM-run courses were misrepresented as UC offerings, and wonders which departments are already using OPMs, how these arrangements benefit students, and what circumstances truly require OPM-hired instructors versus UC faculty and instructors. Similarly, CAES [College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences] questions what prompted the audit by the CSA and asks what the perceived benefits of hiring an outside company to manage these courses rather than vetting and hiring lecturers to manage the course internally are. CAES also wonders whether every OPM instructor should be reviewed and appointed as a lecturer to ensure that they meet UC standards, and whether the interim policy reflects a move to start offering third-party online courses for students for credit...

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November 20, 2025

Katherine S. Newman

Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Re: Systemwide Senate Review of Interim Presidential Policy for the University of California's Use of Online Program Management Companies

Dear Provost Newman,

As requested, I distributed for systemwide Academic Senate review the Interim Presidential Policy for UC's Use of Online Program Management Companies (OPMs). All 10 Academic Senate divisions and two systemwide Senate committees (UCEP [University Committee on Educational Policy], UCFW [University Committee on Faculty Welfare]) submitted comments. These were discussed at the Academic Council's November 17, 2025 meeting, and the compiled feedback is attached for your reference.

The policy responds to recommendations from the California State Auditor (CSA) concerning UC's use of OPMs. It establishes systemwide standards to uphold academic integrity, transparency, and compliance with federal and accreditation requirements in OPM partnerships. **The policy requires that students be informed when courses are taught by non-UC instructors employed by OPMs and that instructor affiliations and credentials be clearly disclosed.** It prohibits enrollment-based financial incentives, outlines expectations for student interaction and assessment, and provides guidance for working with accredited and non-accredited affiliates. The policy currently applies to graduate-level programs but may extend to undergraduate programs as UC expands online course offerings.

Senate reviewers expressed general support for the intent of the interim policy to ensure academic integrity, transparency, and compliance with federal and accreditation standards in UC's partnerships with OPMs. They viewed the policy as an appropriate and necessary response to the CSA's findings and an important step toward establishing consistent systemwide standards to address identified risks. However, reviewers found that the policy would benefit from greater clarity and detail regarding faculty oversight, intellectual property, and implementation mechanisms.

Policy Scope and Definitions: Reviewers requested clarification of the policy's scope, noting inconsistent references to courses, programs, and divisions, as well as conflation of terms such as "schools," "divisions," and "Extension." They recommended aligning terminology, clearly distinguishing between instructional and non-instructional OPM activities, and defining the policy's coverage as UC expands into undergraduate online instruction.

Senate Oversight: Reviewers emphasized that Senate review and continuing faculty oversight must apply to all OPM-affiliated courses and programs. UCEP specifically noted the need to align OPM-related instructional hiring with Senate Regulations 750A and 800A, which govern faculty appointments and course approval. The committee also highlighted variation in Professional and Continuing Education hiring practices across campuses and recommended stronger coordination and oversight to ensure consistency and academic standards.

Instructor Qualifications and Transparency: Faculty supported disclosure of instructor affiliation and credentials but questioned the usefulness of fine distinctions among UC-employed and UC-contracted instructors. Several noted that professional programs may appropriately prioritize industry experience over traditional academic credentials.

Student Data Privacy and Security: There was strong concern about protecting student information handled by third-party vendors. Reviewers urged that all OPM contracts undergo IT security and privacy review consistent with UC data protection policies and that data retention and recovery protocols be clearly specified.

Intellectual Property and Course Ownership: Reviewers sought explicit assurance that instructional materials developed by UC instructors remain UC or faculty property and that UC retains control over the use and withdrawal of content hosted by OPM platforms.

Course Evaluation: Reviewers supported student evaluations but advised aligning them with UC's established evaluation practices, supplementing them with peer or faculty review and periodic program-level assessments similar to academic program reviews. UCEP recommended that evaluations include items addressing the adequacy of online modality support for students.

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Compliance, Accountability, and Transparency: While reviewers supported the prohibition on incentive-based compensation, they found enforcement provisions vague and recommended clearer accountability for campuses and vendors, defined consequences for violations, and greater transparency into UC's OPM relationships. Many suggested a systemwide registry or regular reporting of contracts, financial terms, and oversight outcomes, and encouraged UC to build internal capacity for online program management to safeguard academic quality.

Overall, Senate reviewers support the policy's goals and urge UCOP to strengthen provisions related to faculty oversight and appointment processes, clarify terminology and scope, specify data and intellectual property protections, and establish robust enforcement and transparency mechanisms before issuing a final policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to opine. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ahmet Palazoglu

Chair, Academic Council

cc: Academic Council, Director of Academic Planning and Policy Corona, Senate Division Executive Directors, Senate Executive Director Lin

Source: https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/reports/council-chair-to-provost-presidential-opm-policy.pdf (pp. 1-3)

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:30 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [online education](#), [UC](#), [UC-Davis](#)

Straws in the Wind - Part 182

From the [Cornell Daily Sun](#): *Cornell's \$60 million settlement with the Trump administration includes a unique financial provision — a \$30 million investment in agricultural research, to occur in installments over the next three years. However, it is not yet clear how exactly funds will be distributed. The settlement, which was reached on Nov. 7 after months of negotiations following the Trump administration's decision to freeze \$250 million in federal research grants and contracts from April 2025, also requires the University to pay \$30 million to the federal government over the next three years. In return, the administration agreed to drop the Civil Rights complaints and investigations they had raised against the University and will restore the halted funding.*



The settlement states that the agricultural investment should be directed towards "research programs that will directly benefit U.S. farmers through lower costs of production and enhanced efficiency, including but not limited to programs that incorporate AI and robotics, such as Digital Agriculture and Future Farming Technologies."

...When asked about the purpose of the agricultural research investment and the University's plans for allocating the funds, a Cornell spokesperson referred back to the settlement FAQ page, stating that it "includes all the information we have to share at this time." Currently, the University is developing "a program within the Office of the Vice Provost for Research (OVPR) to administer the disbursement of this funding. More information will be disseminated by the OVPR later in the year," the Federal Agreement FAQ page states...*

Full story at <https://www.cornellsun.com/article/2025/11/where-could-cornell-s-30-million-agriculture-research-investment-from-the-settlement-deal-go>.

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*<https://info.cornell.edu/executive-orders/federal-agreement/>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:20 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [Cornell](#), [politics](#)

Thursday, December 4, 2025

The Forecast

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[Why folks are nervous - Part 2](#)

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The UCLA Anderson Forecast met yesterday on campus to discuss the economic outlook, despite gaps in federal data caused by the government shutdown.

From a news release by the Anderson School: *The December 2025 UCLA Anderson Forecast for the United States and California describe a situation with two economic trends currently working in opposition. In some sectors of the economy, ongoing and optimistic investment in artificial intelligence infrastructure and rising income among high-wealth households drive the economy, while tariff-induced inflation, policy-driven uncertainty and a gradually weakening labor market indicate signs of sectoral weakness. The result is an economy expected to soften through the first quarter of 2026 before regaining strength later in the year.*

In California, the outlook is further complicated by a bifurcated economy: AI, aerospace and other high-productivity



sectors continue to expand, while construction, non-durable goods, leisure and hospitality, and government-funded services face significant headwinds. Deportations, elevated input costs, and weak job growth prolong an employment recession expected to last into early 2026, even as the state continues to outpace the nation in overall productivity.

On balance, the Forecast does not expect an immediate downturn or an immediate resurgence. Instead, both the nation and the state are poised to muddle through early 2026 before experiencing stronger growth in 2026 and 2027...

Full news release at <https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/press-releases/us-economy-slow-through-early-2026-while-california-navigates-two-speed-recovery>.

You can see the full forecast conference - which includes discussion of cryptocurrency and private equity - at the link below:



Or direct to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ks0Wu0fw3FI>.

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Contributors

- [California Policy Issues](#)
- [Toby Higbie](#)
- [UCLA Faculty Association](#)

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Labels: [UCLA](#)

From the [Daily Cal](#): *UC Berkeley has indefinitely closed the Multicultural Community Center, a space known to students as the MCC that offers cross-cultural community building, due to “criticism received from a number of campus stakeholders.” The MCC... has been closed since the beginning of summer, and campus administrators have offered no solid return date. Interns at the center — who were initially not informed of the indefinite closure — were told by professional staff that the space would remain closed during conversations with the chancellor’s office regarding its current operating procedures.*



...The center had been used in the past as a meeting and organizing space for pro-Palestinian groups during the 2024 Free Palestine Encampments. Students had also faced pressure from administrators to remove signs from windows in support of progressive causes, to which they complied.

...“We’re caught up in this antisemitism debate that’s going across all university campuses,” [a] junior intern said. “Because of the signage that was on our walls — even though we were open to let anyone put stuff on our walls — they (decided to) not have the space basically be open for any group, and label the campus as having transgender wellness initiatives, DEI-related initiatives and support for things that could be conflated with antisemitism.”

...The MCC has been under scrutiny for alleged antisemitism. Interns mentioned that there were multiple instances of students coming into the space to confront interns regarding perceptions of antisemitism...

Full story at https://www.dailycal.org/news/campus/student-life/uc-berkeley-administration-silently-shutters-student-multicultural-space/article_f1141eab-1212-46c0-a749-f5c7e0bf50ed.html.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:20 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [diversity](#), [politics](#), [UC-Berkeley](#)

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

Partial Restoration

You'd have to be a really faithful reader of this blog and someone with a very good memory to recall our postings from back in 2023 about UC-Berkeley's attempt to close an anthropology library. It resulted in an occupation by students and a promise of some kind of reading room.* Two years later, we have a follow-up:



From the [Daily Cal](#): *UC Berkeley’s anthropology department opened the refurbished Constance Chiang Pan Anthropology Reading Room, or CCPARR, through a gift from anthropology and economics alumna Constance Chiang Pan.*

Due to budget cuts, campus closed the original Anthropology Library as a circulating library in January 2023, which was considered a “big loss” for the campus and department, according to anthropology department chair Sabrina Agarwal... The initial announcement about the library’s closure in 2023 led to a months-long occupation and protest from students and faculty. Eventually, campus and then-Chancellor Carol Christ allowed the department of anthropology to keep the space to create a reading room...

It took almost eight months for the library staff to help retain and reorganize the “invaluable” collection of 20,000 historical anthropological volumes, selection of emeriti books and the UC Berkeley Folklore Archive that was saved by campus’s smaller renovation funds, according to Agarwal. The other 10,000 to 15,000 books were placed in another campus library or can be obtained at the Northern Regional Library Facility, where UC Berkeley archives are stored...

Full story at https://www.dailycal.org/news/campus/following-spring-2023-protests-anthropology-library-reopens-as-constance-chiang-pan-reading-room/article_8d9d0b46-c8e7-4a32-ad05-bfc7240478e8.html.

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Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:30 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [UC-Berkeley](#)

Straws in the Wind - Part 180

From the [Cavalier Daily](#): *Some University [of Virginia] faculty have expressed skepticism about the intentions behind Freedom of Information Act requests they have received in recent years from Virginia residents and organizations. While acknowledging the right of individuals and organizations to file FOIA requests to obtain public records — such as course syllabi or emails — some faculty also claim that the law has been weaponized and created a sense of curriculum policing at the University.*



According to the Code of Virginia, the Virginia FOIA law ensures access to “public records in the custody of a public body or its officers and employees.” FOIA says that “all public records shall be available for inspection and copying upon request,” unless there is an exemption invoked. Exemptions include certain personnel records, scholastic records, health records or other information which is shared with a public institution under the condition of confidentiality. Any Virginia citizen can file a FOIA request to receive records from a state public body.

...According to Assoc. Sociology Prof. Ian Mullins, recently some FOIA requests have targeted faculty within the College of Arts and Sciences Engagements program. The Engagements program is a yearlong sequence of small, seminar style courses for first-year College students that aims to introduce them to the liberal arts and sciences. Janet Spittler, Engagements program co-director and associate religious studies professor, confirmed via an email statement to The Cavalier Daily that every course in the Engaging Aesthetics Pillar — one of four pillars in the program which focuses on exploring the world through “the lens of human creativity” — has received a FOIA request for its syllabi. Spittler was not able to confirm when these requests were filed, nor whether the requests were limited to the Fall 2025 semester or not.

...Although [Media Studies Prof. Robin Means] Coleman emphasized that individuals and organizations have the right to access these records, and that these rights are crucial for holding public institutions accountable, she also stressed that this right has been abused to target certain offices and faculty at universities across the country. “I’m not opposed in any way to the spirit [or] the principles of what’s behind [open records requests],” Coleman said. “The challenge that folks are facing is navigating the weaponization of that really useful tool ... It becomes sort of de facto censorship that faculty have to worry about.” ...

Full story at <https://www.cavalierdaily.com/article/2025/11/faculty-question-the-motives-behind-foia-requests-for-course-materials-text-messages>.

Note: UC emails, etc., are subject to Public Records requests. You should not assume privacy.

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From the [NY Times](#): *A University of Oklahoma student says she is the victim of religious discrimination because a psychology instructor gave her a zero for an essay that cited the Bible and said that “the lie that there are multiple genders” is “demonic.” The complaint by the student, Samantha Fulnecky, follows a series of similar conflicts at colleges around the country over how professors should talk about gender in the classroom, a battle in which each side insists it is protecting academic freedom and First Amendment rights.*

The instructor who flunked Ms. Fulnecky on the essay has been placed on administrative leave while the school investigates the episode, according to a statement the University of Oklahoma posted on social media. The instructor is a graduate student at the university. Dozens of professors have lost their jobs or been disciplined in recent months over issues related to political speech, often because of posts on social media. Texas A&M University fired a faculty member who was accused of teaching a course that recognized more than two genders, after a video of her discussing gender in class was posted online.

...The instructor, who was not named in the university’s statement, declined to comment, writing in an email that, “as advised by my lawyer, I will not be making any public statements at this time.” ...

Full story at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/02/us/oklahoma-bible-essay-gender-teasing-zero.html>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:20 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [academic freedom](#), [politics](#), [privacy](#), [Texas A and M](#), [U of Oklahoma](#), [U of Virginia](#), [UC](#)

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